

National Elk Refuge

Miller Ranch



Located at the foot of the Gros Ventre Mountains with a commanding view of the Teton Range, the Miller Ranch has been an integral part of the evolving settlement history of the Jackson Hole valley for over 100 years. The Miller Ranch represents the coming together of settlement, ranching and conservation in this isolated valley. Today, the valuable link to the past is owned and maintained by the National Elk Refuge.

WELCOME

The aging wooden buildings known as the Miller Ranch have been on site since the turn of the century. Your visit allows you to step back in time and listen to the story these historic structures have to tell – a story of homesteading, ranching and conservation that mirrors that of the surrounding valley.

WHO WERE THE MILLERS?

Robert Miller, born in Argyle, Wisconsin, arrived in Jackson Hole in 1885. He chose a homestead site that had a large spring nearby and included a cabin said to have been built by an outlaw named Teton Jackson. At the time, Miller's was only the third homestead claim to be filed in the Jackson Hole valley.

In 1893, Miller returned to the east to marry Grace Green of Ottawa, Illinois. Together, they returned to Jackson

Hole and in 1895 began construction on a two-story log home, the home that is known today as the Miller House. Their home was considered luxurious for its day and became the center of social activity for the homesteaders and ranchers who began pouring into the valley around the turn of the century.

The Millers lived on the ranch site until 1914 when they sold their home and 1240 acres of property to the federal government. The Miller House then became the headquarters for the newly-established National Elk Refuge. The Miller Ranch buildings are one of the National Elk Refuge's most important cultural resources.

A STROLL AROUND THE MILLER RANCH

The Miller Ranch has three main structures of historic interest: the house, barn and U.S. Forest Service cabin.

The Miller House

The original home of Robert and Grace Miller was a three-room structure built in 1885. It was located west of the current Miller House.

Construction of the current Miller House began in 1895 and was completed in 1898. The house was massive for its time and is sometimes referred to as Jackson's first "trophy home." The large home served as an important meeting place for the community. The first elections in Jackson Hole were held in the house in 1898 as well as numerous civic meetings and social gatherings. It was even temporarily used as a U.S. post office.

When Robert and Grace Miller sold their ranch in 1914, the Miller House became the National Elk Refuge headquarters. The site manager lived in the house from 1914 to 1942.

By 1965, the house was in poor condition. National Elk Refuge staff determined the house should be moved or donated to the Jackson Volunteer Fire Department for structural fire practice. Through intervention of the Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum, the Miller House was retained and nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1969. The Miller House was rehabilitated for continued use as employee housing through the spring of 2005.

The Miller Ranch opened to the public in May 2005.



The Miller Barn

The barn, completed in 1898, was vital to the Millers' ranching activities. The prominent couple had one of the valley's largest ranching operation, with as many as 400 head of cattle.

The barn contained enough stalls for 18 horses. The barn also housed the work horses of the National Elk Refuge until 1973. The upper floor stored hay for many years and is currently used to store Refuge supplies and equipment. The lower floor is open to the public. You can enter the building by a door located on the side of the barn opposite from the parking area. Inside, you will see the horse stalls with hay bins that held feed for the horses. Tack hooks are still mounted on the walls where equipment used for working the horses would hang.



Forest Service Cabin

In 1902, Robert Miller was appointed as supervisor of the Teton Division of the newly-created Yellowstone Forest Reserve. This cabin was built to serve as the local administrative office for the valley's forest lands. In 1905, the U.S. Forest Service was created, and Miller became the supervisor of the Teton National Forest in 1908.

Visitors are not currently allowed to enter the cabin because the building is unstable. Refuge staff hopes to restore the cabin and open it to the public in the future.



Buck and Rail Fences

Fences like the one encircling the house were a common sight on ranches in this area. The fences are named for the X-shaped brace or "cross buck" supports and horizontal "rails." Much of the soil in the Jackson Hole valley is extremely rocky. The buck and rail fences eliminated the need for the laborious task of digging holes in the soil.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- The Miller Ranch is open seasonally from late May through early September. Check at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson for specific dates and times.
- Pets must remain on leashes to avoid potential disturbance of wildlife.
- Some areas of the Miller House are occasionally used for seasonal housing. Please respect the posted hours and do not enter areas of the home that are indicated as private.
- For more information, contact the National Elk Refuge Administrative Offices at 307 / 733 9121.

ACCESSIBILITY

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 7-1-1 for free connection to the State transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information, or to address accessibility needs, please contact Refuge staff at 307 / 733 9212 or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.